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magazine



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From “the editor



Who would have thought a campaign to save our village library would have put Sonning Common on the map?

We've been all over the place in recent weeks, hogging the first three pages of the Henley Standard, following our day of protest on 10 January, and featuring on local TV and radio broadcasts. Radio 4 even gave Sonning Common a mention!

This village has banded together to send the clear message to Oxfordshire County Council that our library is not for closing.

A three-month public consultation period is now underway on the county council's proposals to stop funding our library. See pages 2 and 3 for details of how to make your voice heard.

Planning and the potential development of Sonning Common are the other big issues affecting the village at the present time.

See pages 14 and 15 for information on the district council's new core strategy plan and its potential impact on Sonning Common.

Thank you to all of our contributors to this edition.

ROS VARNES Editor

Email me at:

sonningcommonmagazine@googlemail.com

ps...

Sonning Common Magazine is on sale at the village library in Grove Road for £1.50 a copy. Annual subscriptions are available for £15. Contact distribution manager Geoffrey Adams. Email: geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com
Phone: 0118 972 2134

Magazine contributions may be posted to: 1 Grove Road, Sonning Common RG4 9TD.

WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS MAGAZINE, THE EDITOR AND THE PUBLISHER CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS THAT OCCUR.

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COVER IMAGE – UP IN ARMS by Ros Varnes
(From left) Joseph Beville, Lucy Ward and Grace Daniels, from Kidmore End School, protesting outside the library.

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library CLOSURE

Community unites in anger at planned

The people of Sonning Common have banded together to send a loud, clear message to the county council that they will fight to retain their village library.

Oxfordshire County Council announced in late November that Sonning Common's library was on its hit list for closure - one of 20 of the county's 43 libraries targeted due to spending cuts.

The village responded by setting up a Save Our Library campaign, run by the Friends of Sonning Common Library, to appeal to the council to maintain its £47,000 a year funding for the library and the services of its professional library manager.

Around 200 children and adults from Sonning Common, Kidmore End and Peppard took part in a protest outside the library in Grove Road on 10 January.

They were joined by local authors including Simon Kernick, whose latest novel recently topped the UK paperback charts, and Linda Gray, executive director of the Henley Literary Festival. Authors Leslie Wilson, from Reading, and Mary Hooper, from Henley, also took part in the protest.

The village's community choir, Nottakwire, protested through song with specially-written lyrics about the importance of the library, set to popular tunes.

The event attracted widespread media coverage with broadcasts on BBC Radio 4, Meridian Tonight, BBC South Today, BBC Oxford and BBC Berkshire and reports in the Henley Standard, Reading Evening Post and Reading Chronicle.

The village's day of protest culminated in a public meeting in the village hall, hosted by Sonning Common Parish Council. An estimated 250 people attended the meeting to hear presentations, ask questions and air their views about the proposed library closure.

The speakers were Ros Varnes, chair of the Friends of Sonning Common Library, Andy Lovell, governor, Sonning Common Primary School, and John Jackson, director for Social and Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council, with responsibility for libraries.

Ros Varnes, from the Friends of Sonning Common Library, said: "We were astounded by the number of people who turned out to support both our public protest and public meeting.

"The county council can be left in no doubt as to the passion we feel for our local library, which is at the heart of our village community, and we will continue to make our case to county in the strongest possible terms.

"Our library is in the special position of being attached to the primary school, which already contributes significantly towards its £8,000 a year running costs. Given that our library is well-used, attracting around 600 visitors per week, and part-funded by the school, we cannot understand why it is even under threat."

Mr Jackson told the packed meeting that the library plan was simply a proposal at this stage and that consultation on the fate of the county's libraries would start in early February.

The county council is planning to continue to provide library services via a 'hub' library in Henley, supported by a mobile library service to Sonning Common and other outlying areas. It is also intending to extend the loan

service to include e-books and e-audio downloads.

The village library, run by volunteers, is another option currently being considered by the county council, in line with the Government's 'Big Society' agenda.

Mr Jackson said: "The proposed library closures are the result of an extremely significant reduction in county council funding of more than a quarter over the next four years. We need to save nearly £120 million a year over the next four years. Closing the libraries will save us £2 million a year."

County councillor for the area, Carol Viney, pledged her support to the Save Our Library campaign.

The Friends of Sonning Common Library have handed over to the county council all of the Save Our Library postcards and correspondence received to date.

Further comment to the county council may be made via: futurelibraries@oxfordshire.gov.uk

or by writing to:

Mr John Jackson
Director, Social and Community Services
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND
Phone: 01865 792422

Join the Save Our Library campaign on Facebook (type in 'Save Sonning Common library')

Or send your contact details to: Mr Douglas Kedge, 71 Lea Road (opposite the police station), Sonning Common RG4 9LH

What children say about the proposed closure of our village library

(This one to the Queen!)

Dear Your Majesty
Our library is going to be shut down and I love borrowing books. So, please can you do something about it.
Emily Higson, age 8, Sonning Common Primary School

In the summer I didn't have any books to read so I asked Mrs Dunstan (the library manager) if she could recommend some books. She recommended some and I couldn't put them down for the whole summer. They were probably some of the best books that I have read. I do not know what I would do without the library. Please don't allow me to find out.
Scott Barnett, age 10, Sonning Common Primary School

Me and my brother have been using the library for many years and we have both developed our love of books and exploring different topics through the use of the library and its great facilities. My favourite subjects are history and sport and the library has been a significant part of me developing my love of these subjects. It will be a great loss to the community if the library is taken away from us, especially for families who cannot afford to buy books.
Matt Davies, age 9, Kidmore End Primary School

The library should stay open because it is very local and easy to get to. We walk there when we visit. I read lots more books because I visit the library often. Our library is quite small and it is easy to find my favourite books. Rosemary, the librarian, is very helpful and lovely. She needs to keep her job. If I have a project it helps to find extra information at our library. Please don't let them close our library as we really use it.
William Mullin, age 9, Kidmore End Primary School

Please don't close the library because I love looking at the dinosaur and animal books.
William Beville, age 7, Kidmore End Primary School

TOP ROW FROM L-R:

- Oliver Wagstaff, Joseph Beville and Charlie Wagstaff
- Nottakwire at the protest
- Best-selling author Simon Kernick
- Village residents at the public meeting in the village hall - picture courtesy of the Henley Standard

RIGHT:

- Sonning Common Primary School children at the protest

Pictures: ROS VARNES



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It's all change at the parish council

Councillor Alan Rooke has been appointed the new chairman of Sonning Common Parish Council.

Councillor Douglas Kedge, of Lea Road, is the new vice-chairman.

The appointments were made after Pat Hughes, the former parish council chairwoman, stepped down in December after 10 years.

She was joined by councillors Dirk Jones, Jane Holmes and Richard Black who also resigned along with parish clerk Sheila Jenkins.

New chairman councillor Rooke said: "Thank you to all of the outgoing councillors for their hard work and contributions to the parish council and village community.

"This year will see us appointing fresh faces on the council and in our office. I see this as a truly fresh start and would invite anyone who is interested in either a role on the council or in the position of parish clerk to contact us.

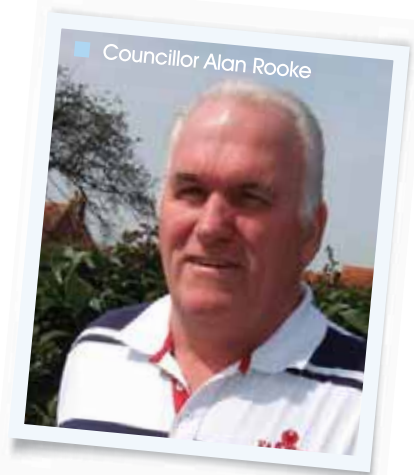
"We are keen to create a new council of varied interests and opinions that will work for the good of our community.

"As there are only four months until the elections in May, now would be an ideal time to join the parish council as it would give people a taste of what is involved before committing themselves for a four-year term.

"The parish council is a great way to make the voices of villagers heard and to have a say in how our community moves forward."

He invited people to visit him at his surgery at Pressed for Time, Wood Lane, on Saturday mornings or to call into the council office in the village hall for further information.

Details of forthcoming council meetings, which are open to the public, are available from Laura Viney, temporary parish clerk, at the parish council office in the village hall. They are also displayed on village noticeboards.



Want to put something back into your community?

The local Lions club is appealing for new members - people prepared to work together to fund-raise and improve the quality of life for those less fortunate.



Lions clubs support many local, community-based projects and help to provide financial support for worldwide projects related to improving sight, street children, medical research and disaster relief.

The 900 Lions clubs in the British Isles and Ireland have already donated US\$ 603,000 towards the rebuilding of Haiti, following its devastating earthquake.

If you would like to consider joining Goring, Woodcote and District Lions Club, please get in touch:

Phone: 0845 833 9837

E-mail: info@lions-gwd.org.uk

Website: www.lions-gwd.org.uk

Club (dinner) meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at Caversham Heath Golf Club, RG4 7UT.

Thank you to everyone who supported our Lions club over the past year and most recently the Lions Santa tour of South Oxfordshire villages just before Christmas, which raised £2,230.

Help shape the future with the 2011 census

Every village household is due to receive a 2011 census questionnaire by post next month.

Decisions about everyday facilities such as playgrounds, water pipes, refuse collection, and even where new local shops should be located, are based on census statistics.

Sonning Common receives an annual grant from the Government that is based on the number of people living in the area, according to census information.

This funding can be used for schools, transport, employment and training and many other services.

It is compulsory by law to complete the census. It's all confidential and no personal information will be shared with anyone.

The census questionnaire may be returned by post, or completed securely on-line.

For more information and help of all kinds with the census, visit www.census.gov.uk or call the census helpline on 0300 0201 101.

A message in a bottle to save lives

Local Lions clubs are running a free Message in a Bottle scheme to provide potentially life-saving information about sick and vulnerable people.

In Oxfordshire alone more than 65,000 people are already benefiting from this scheme.

The Lions provide vulnerable people with small, plastic bottles. They can fill them with personal information, such as medical conditions, regular medications, allergies, doctor's details and their next of kin.

This information can prove critical when the emergency services are called to the home of someone who lives on their own and who has, perhaps, collapsed or been involved in an incident.

The bottle is kept in the fridge and a green sticker is placed on the door. A second sticker is placed inside the main entrance door to alert the emergency services to the bottle's existence.

The bottles, together with an explanatory leaflet, are available from the health centre and the local chemist. All costs are paid by the Lions Club of Henley-on-Thames.

Young people are concerned about road safety

By DIANA PEARMAN

As part of the Sonning Common Community Plan, students at Chiltern Edge School were asked to complete a questionnaire.

The young people, aged 11-16, were asked about things to do, meeting places, finding information about matters that concern them, traffic, bus services and general village facilities.

Of the 325 young people who responded, 53 live in Sonning Common.

It emerged that young people would like pedestrian crossings in Reades Lane and by the shops on Peppard Road; for cars to slow down, since they often feel unsafe; and cycle paths.

Sixty per cent said they would like bus fares to be reduced. While the Reading buses are frequently used, very few students travel to Henley.

Similar to findings in the adult survey, 30 per cent of young people felt the village centre would be improved by planting more trees and providing seats; 35 per cent thought toilets an important facility and were concerned about the lack of pavements in some areas of the village.

When asked about activities they would be interested in doing locally, the most popular was climbing, followed by badminton, tennis, fitness, dance and drama.

Cost was identified as a factor prohibiting participation as well as activities being at the wrong time and a lack of transport to get there.

A total of 37 per cent of young people said they met their friends in Sonning Common - 14 per cent in the village centre, 66 per cent at their houses and 50 per cent in the parks and recreational areas.

The open responses identified further safety issues, such as speeding, youths congregating at the shops, traffic congestion in Grove Road, dangerous parking and the village centre was described as, "too grey".

One young person was concerned about OAPs arguing!!!



CAB reports a startling rise in young people's problems

Last year the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) dealt with three-quarters of a million problems from the under-25s nationally - up 21 per cent on the previous year.

Eighty per cent of the problems experienced by this age group related to just four issues: debt, benefits, housing and employment. Personal loan debts were the major concern.

Christine O'Hare, manager at Henley & District CAB, said: "Last year we saw a noticeable increase in the number of young people seeking our help. It can be scary and daunting to seek advice if you have a problem - but more often than not, the sooner you tackle it, the easier it is to put right.

"Citizens Advice is the UK's biggest advice charity and helps people of any age with any problem. Under-25s often have specific issues, so we've now launched a microsite, www.advice4me.org.uk, aimed specifically at young people.

"The site may be viewed on mobile phones as well as via computers. We also have friendly advisors available for face-to-face appointments. Our advice is free and confidential."

Call Henley & District CAB on 01491 572129 to make an appointment. Appointments are available in Sonning Common.

Website: www.coax.org.uk



Youngsters praised for their writing talent

The best young authors in the Sonning Common area have recently been announced.

Florella Scozzafava, 17, of Kennylands Road and Alice Horncastle, 13, from Caversham, won gold in the Young Authors 2010 competition.

Twelve-year-olds Ursula Knights and Natalya Redmond, both from the village, received silver medals while Louisa Carlisle, 15, from Bramley Crescent, Sonning Common and Caversham girl Holly Jeffreys took bronze.

The aim of the annual competition - open to 11 to 16-year-olds who live or study in Sonning Common, Peppard or Kidmore End - is to encourage children's interest in literature and writing.

Competition organiser Dirk Jones, from Kennylands Road, said: "We have had another superb demonstration of talent and determination with some excellent standards of writing in the English language.

"The competition is not only about putting stories into words but also about building confidence in saying, "Yes, I can do it!"

"The English language, with its wide range of versatility and subtlety, is one of the cornerstones of communication. It must be supported by education and, above all, the availability of knowledge and excitement from books freely available in libraries."

Sponsors of the competition include Sonning Common Parish Council, the Chiltern Edge Community Association, the Henley Standard, and many village parent and grandparent!

The gold award winners received a laptop computer and software while winners of the silver award won a notebook computer plus software. Kindle book readers were awarded to the bronze award winners.

The 2011 competition opens on 1 May 2011 when it is hoped more sponsors will support the scheme.

FILMS ON SHOW

Upcoming films to be shown by Peppard Revels are:

Friday 11 February
SOME LIKE IT HOT

Friday 18 March
THE DAY OF THE JACKAL

The shows start at 7.15pm at Peppard War Memorial Hall. Last time we were full so book early. We'd love to see some Sonning Common residents there!

The evening includes supper, a glass of wine and the film. There will be a licensed bar all evening.

Tickets, priced £10, are available from Geoff and Lesley Pitcher, Chiltern View, Gallowstree Road, Peppard Common RG9 5LB
Phone: 0118 972 3050
Email: peppardrevels@mac.com
Website: www.peppardrevels.org.uk

DR JOHN HASLER



The Holiday Club at Chiltern Edge

The successful Holiday Club at Chiltern Edge School is running again during the Easter and summer holidays.

Children aged four to 16 can enjoy activities including film-making, forest fun, creative cookery, arts and crafts and dance and drama.

The club offers fun and inspirational childcare for working parents and opportunities for children to try new activities and meet new friends.

The club will be running:

- 11-15 APRIL
- 25-29 JULY
- 1-5 AUGUST
- 8-12 AUGUST

The school has also introduced a new after-school club, The Chill Out @ Chiltern Edge, offering somewhere safe and supervised for children to go from the break of the school day until 6pm during term-time.

For further information and to book places contact:
Brenda McNulty on 0118 972 1500 ext. 449 or email
bmcnulty@chilternedge.oxon.sch.uk



NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY:

Regular library events will continue as normal at least until the end of March:

Rhymetimes will be held on 7 and 21 February, and 7 and 21 March from 10am - 10.30am.

Saturday Storytimes will continue every Saturday morning from 10am.

There will be a half-term colouring competition for under-12s at the end of February.

For more information about any of these events please contact the library on 0118 972 2448.

Rosemary Dunstan
Library manager

Calling all local singers

Margaret Moola and Elaine Williams, leaders of the village singing group, Nottakwire, are planning a community 'Big Sing' day in the village hall on 14 May to raise money for local good causes.

Please make contact if you would like to be involved. We are looking for individuals, or groups of any size - children, young adult or adult - who would like to perform at this event. A slot of any length will be made available, either morning or afternoon, to suit requirements.

Please contact us on 0118 972 1248 or email us at margaret.moola@btinternet.com. We would be delighted to hear from you.

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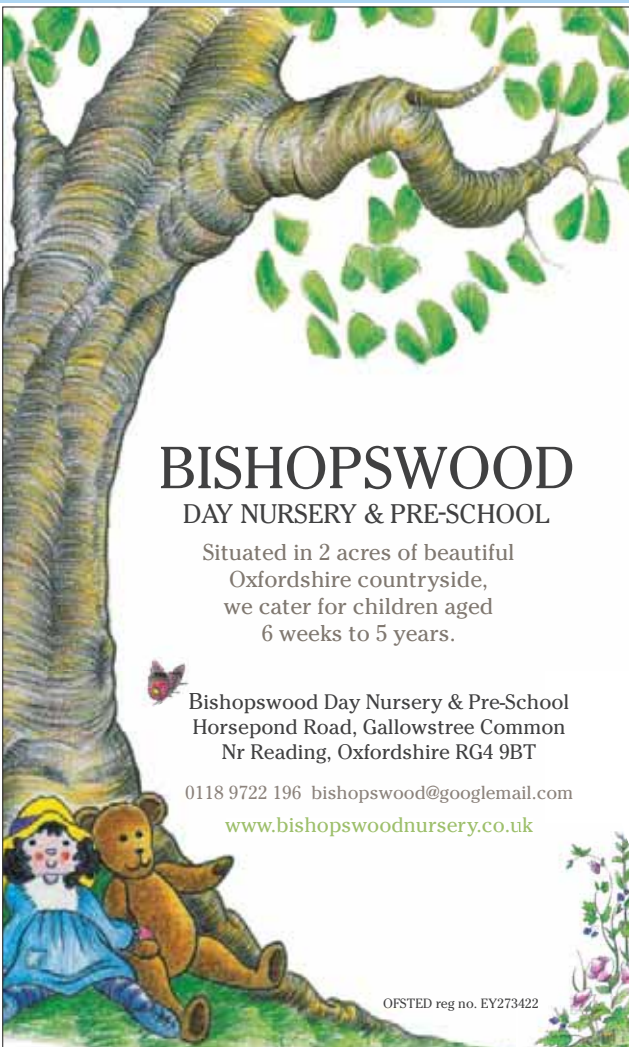


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TOP:

in The beloved Paddington

BOTTOM:

in Helen James



Goodbye Greece and Turkey and hello Blighty

It's sad to think that the childhood adventures of Helen James are nearing an end but she had to come home some time! Here we join her for the final part of her overseas journey, continuing her life in the Mediterranean before finally returning home.

"After a great Christmas in Corfu, soon the spring came and it was time to return to island-hopping.

We sailed through the Corinthian Canal (from the Ionian to the Aegean seas) and onward round many Greek and Turkish islands from the spring to the autumn. Once again, we ran out of money so returned to Rhodes to sustain ourselves through the winter.

While we were laid up in Rhodes, we discovered a number of other European boats and families doing the same as us: taking time out for a sailing adventure. Obviously my parents' bohemian generation all had the same mad dreams.

As we got to know the occupants of the neighbouring French, German and Italian boats, we soon discovered that we could pool our knowledge and resources to set up a waterborne school.

So, every morning my sister Justine and I would join the children from the other families to move from boat to boat having lessons in French, music and history. We had great fun and it certainly beat staring out of a misty, old classroom window back home!

While we were moored up in Rhodes, whom should we meet but Dad's Boat (the expensive motor yacht that Dad maintained for the winter following his confrontation with its queue-jumping owner).

It turned out that Dad's Boat had followed us around the Mediterranean as the owners wanted to ask Dad to look after the vessel again that winter.

By this time word was spreading about Dad's abilities as a mechanic. As a result, people were sailing from miles around to ask him to fix their boats.

Soon, it was like the routine of working life back home again, except that Dad was working hard repairing boats instead of cars - albeit from a much more scenic workshop.

That, coupled with the fact that he was homesick, resulted in his decision to want to return home. We had all agreed before we left England that as soon as one of us wanted to return, we would go.

So, three-and-a-half years after our sailing adventure had begun, we sold Paddington in Corfu, with heavy hearts, and packed up to head home - a journey which took us four days in a rusty, old camper van.

Once back 'home', we had no choice but to go and live with my grandparents at Selsey Bill, in Sussex. Still, at least we were near the sea.

At first, it was horrible coming home. We had lived in swimsuits and flip-flops, swam and snorkeled almost daily and, above all, we

were free. Home meant school, routine, new friends and trying to fit in. It was all rather alien to us - Justine, now aged 12 and me, 14.

But on the plus side we discovered, upon returning to school, that we were much more advanced in our studies than our contemporaries.

Eventually, we moved to Devon and a new chapter of our lives began as Mum and Dad bought a village post office to run.

I never thought I'd meet my soul mate on a racing circuit, but that's what happened. From racing against him to husband in about 18 months!

It really was the most amazing childhood adventure and I'd do it all again tomorrow with my own family - if they agreed. It's been fantastic to share my adventure with readers of the magazine and I hope it inspires them to follow their own dreams. *n*





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SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE –

the future

BY JOHN PEARMAN

The Government has returned responsibility for housing and planning to local councils, including decisions on the amount of housing.

This has given added impetus to the South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC's) core strategy document, published for consultation in early December of last year.

"The responsibility is now ours to address how best to meet the various challenges facing us, including how best to foster a healthy local economy and how to meet the present and on-going need for more housing," said councillor Angie Paterson, SODC's cabinet member for planning.

The South Oxfordshire Proposed Submission Core Strategy identifies potential directions for growth and new developments in the area over the next 25 years.

With 111 pages of text plus an additional 46 pages of appendices, maps and tables, the document (apart from being a cure for insomnia) will be the delivery strategy used by the district council in making all its major land-use decisions, such as housing and employment developments, through to 2027.

The document outlines an overall development plan for the area, the locations for new housing and employment opportunities as well as shopping, transport, education, leisure and community needs.

The delivery of this strategy is seen as being dependent upon partnership working with a wide range of private and public stakeholders.

From the standpoint of a resident of Sonning Common perhaps two elements of the core strategy are worth highlighting.

The first is the classification of Sonning Common as one of the 12 'larger villages' in the South Oxfordshire area.

These larger villages, together with the towns of Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford, are seen as providing a strong network of settlements with a good range of services. It means that all populations in the county will be within about a five-kilometre radius of any of these 'centres'.

It is acknowledged that the towns and larger villages vary considerably in the services they can offer but all have at least one food store, a primary school, a community hall and public transport links. Most have a doctors surgery and a range of other shops, including a post office.

The strategy envisages the larger villages as acting as local 'service centres' to a network of the surrounding settlements.

The second issue is, of course, the distribution of new housing developments. For South Oxfordshire as a whole, some 4,400 new dwellings are targeted for completion by 2027

(...at least until 2027)

with over half of these allocated to Didcot.

Of the remaining 2,070 dwellings, around 60 per cent will be allocated to the market towns leaving 740 houses to be shared between the 12 larger villages.

The core strategy makes provision for landowners and agents to submit sites they wish to be considered for development.

It is also worth mentioning that the proposals in the document stipulate that any new development should allow for 40 per cent of affordable housing, within which 75 per cent should be social rented houses and 25 per cent intermediate housing (in shared ownership).

All in all, a fairly weighty document and one which will have far-reaching effects for all residents of Sonning Common in the not so distant future. n

n The consultation period ended on 20 January, before publication of this issue of the magazine, but details of Sonning Common Parish Council's response is available from the parish clerk, together with a reference copy of the core strategy document.

n Copies of the core strategy document are currently available for downloading from the SODC website.

New houses in Sonning Common

BY DIANA PEARMAN

It is absolutely clear from its core strategy planning document that South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is intending to permit more new houses to be built in Sonning Common in the next few years.

Sonning Common has been identified as one of the 'hub' villages that will provide local services for the surrounding network of settlements.

The sites shown on the map have been identified as available for housing, although are not necessarily earmarked for development.

Landowners and agents have been invited by the district council to submit sites they wish to be considered for development.

One such site is Lea Meadow, between the Herb Farm and Birdwood Court (Son 9 and part of Son 7 on map).

In 2010 planning permission for the development of Lea Meadow was sought from SODC, a public consultation was held and Sonning Common Parish Council responded by giving a list of reasons why it was felt that this development should not go ahead. The application was later withdrawn.

We understand from planning consultant Ken Dijkman, who is working on behalf of the Lea Meadow landowner, that a revised application for a reduced number of houses to be built on this site is being prepared. The views of the parish council will be sought prior to the plan's submission.

Another site to the south of Kennylands Road (Son 5 on map) has also been discussed. The agents, Carter Jonas, held a consultation with village residents last November. To date, planning permission for this site has not been submitted to SODC.

The Kennylands Road site is part of the open countryside and abuts the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where there is a range of diverse wildlife including badgers, red kites, owls and foxes.

Housing development in the village has raised a number of concerns for residents

over the years, as described here by a long-term resident.

"For 50 years we have fought to keep Sonning Common as a village contained within the village envelope. Reading Borough Council has for many years tried to persuade SODC to hand over to them the villages of Sonning Common and Dunsden down to Sonning Eye.

"The reason being, that Reading has exhausted all available and suitable sites for development and would welcome the opportunity to build on land between Emmer Green and Sonning Common, thereby absorbing us into Reading.

"When the residents were asked to vote on the matter there was an overwhelming decision to remain in South Oxfordshire. A view that

BELOW:

n The sites shown on the map have been identified as available for housing, although are not necessarily earmarked for development.

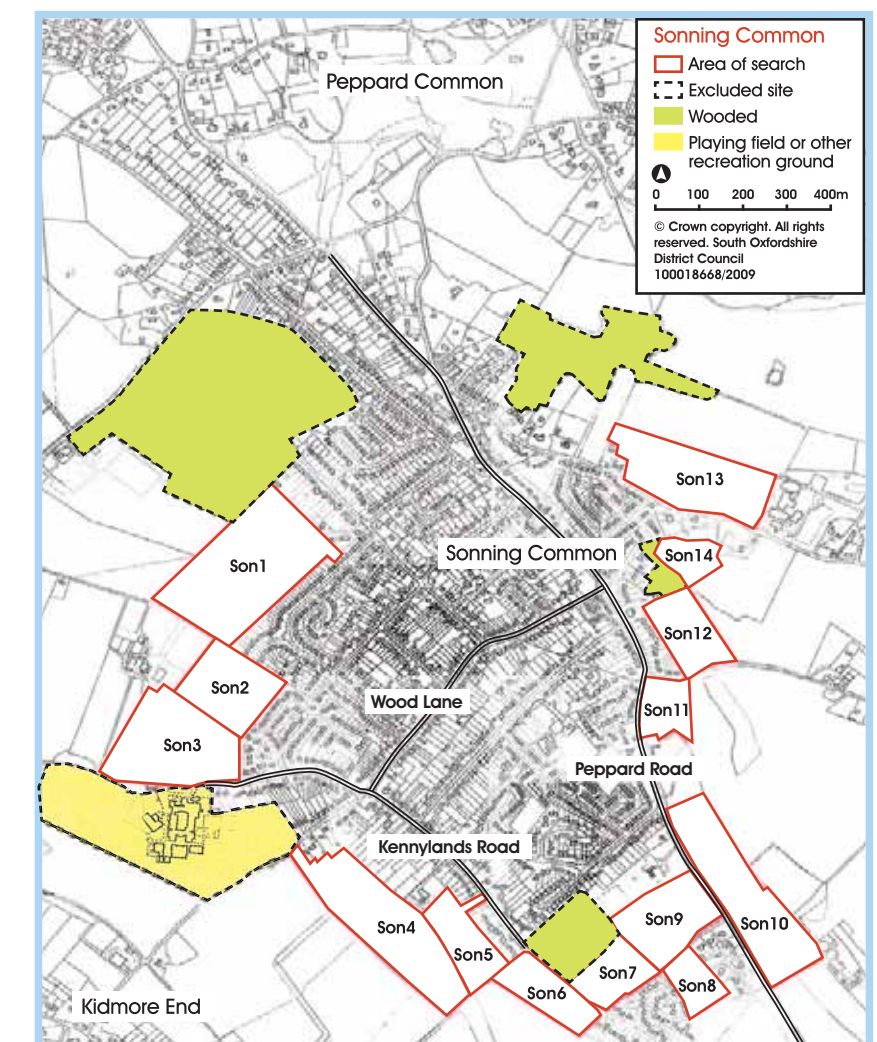
is unlikely to have changed." (Margaret Fieldhouse).

The Sonning Common Community Plan survey, published in 2010, was completed by 78 per cent of households. The responses to the housing question showed that 81 per cent of people favoured small developments on a number of sites and two-thirds thought that 40 per cent of new homes should be affordable.

So as residents, what can we do?

Respond by email or letter to SODC's planning department, giving your views about any proposed development.

Attend parish council meetings when planning applications are discussed and voice your opinion. n





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"People think achieving fitness is all about cardio-vascular work," said Ciaran. "But overall fitness is a combination of strengthening and lengthening the muscles.

"I often see very fit people with tight hamstrings and shoulders. Tight hamstrings affect posture and can lead to back pain while tight muscles in the upper back and neck can result in headaches and lethargy. People are also more susceptible to injuries if their muscles are tight.

"Going to stretch classes improves your flexibility and strengthens your core. Classes are designed to be lighthearted, stimulating and interactive. They are choreographed in such a way that people at all levels of fitness can attend and enjoy them.



"If people stretch regularly - up to three times a week - they will become more flexible and see noticeable improvements within a month."

Ciaran is actively recruiting and training more instructors and expanding her business throughout the region.

She qualified as a fitness instructor over 15 years ago, adding pilates and yoga to her qualifications. She is also a Thai masseuse and uses many of the Thai techniques in her PureStretch massage.

In addition to her PureStretch classes, she offers one-to-one personal training. Her five-week course is designed to help people improve their flexibility, develop core strength, relax and increase their body awareness.

Local businesses can opt for bespoke educational, inspirational and fun PureStretch workshops. Typically, these consist of stretch classes in the morning followed by PureStretch massage, advice on postural awareness within the work environment and relaxation techniques.

The aim of PureStretch is to educate and improve people's awareness of their posture in everyday life, work or home. If you feel this is something you or your business would benefit from, why not contact Ciaran for further information. n

CIARAN ORGAN

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IAIN AKHURST

Director of Sport & Recreation
University of Reading

"Having worked with golfers of all abilities and ages, I know how important flexibility is. I found One-to-One PureStretch was stretch-specific and targeted all areas of the body through a combination of massage, classes and stretching techniques. Ciaran's professional approach makes sure that all workouts are personalised and tailored to the individual. I would recommend PureStretch to anyone who wants to improve their flexibility."

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Concerts raise £700 for pre-school

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the most brilliant groups of people, all of whom were involved in our Christmas Selection Concert in the village hall on 18 December.

Firstly, all the singers, who braved the difficult weather conditions to entertain their audience with mixed items of pure beauty.

Next, all of our stewards and the refreshment team, who did a wonderful job of caring for all those people in the hall.

Thirdly, for our fantastic audience, who not only turned up for the occasion but fully entered into the spirit of the afternoon and gave so very generously towards our Christmas appeal for Sonning Common Pre-School.

The Christmas concert raised almost £580. A further £104 was raised by a group of 20 Nottakwire singers at The Greyhound pub/restaurant on 22 December. We added a little from our own funds to bring the total to £700.

We could not have done this without the help of each one of you! n

MARGARET MOOLA and ELAINE WILLIAMS
Nottakwire leaders
Sedgefield Close

Village hall lunch was a great success

Once again, despite the snow, and thanks to our wonderful volunteer drivers, the Christmas Day lunch in the village hall took place as planned.

We were delighted to have an increase in numbers, and everybody contributed to making the event successful and enjoyable.

There must be something in the air of Sonning Common – so many people, who were not themselves attending the lunch, offered help and contributions.

Thank you to all those people who were involved with helping on the day. And special thanks for the gifts of sherry, port and wine; the loan of glasses; some delicious mince pies and trifles; and to those who prepared vegetables and accompaniments.

Not forgetting our heartfelt thanks to those who did the washing up and clearing away! n

CHRISSIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY
Woodlands Road
& JILL VALLIS
Old Copse Gardens

The loss of the library would be a severe blow

If the public library in Sonning Common is forced to close it will be a retrograde step for this village which prides itself on the scope of the facilities it provides for its residents.

The library is, in many ways, as important as the health centre, dentist, schools, pubs and shops - all of which help to make up the fabric of a happy and satisfactory community.

There are many elderly people in the village whose great joy is literature and who do not wish to read via computer screen, kindle or ipod. There is nothing quite like holding a book.

Computers are available for those who wish to use them and who may not have one in their own home. It is very much a centre to which so many people turn for entertainment and information.

The loss of the library would be a severe blow to many people and we must do what we can to prevent this catastrophe. n

FRED CURZON
Orchard Avenue



Council has a moral duty to keep our library open

I understand that national finances are pressing and that savings must be found, but the closure of learning facilities like libraries is surely not the way forward.

These resources are an inheritance from generations past and I believe it is our moral duty to maintain them for those who follow us in the future.

I have two small children who benefit hugely from a local library, which offers schemes to encourage reading during both term-time and holidays. The library also provides a bank of computers to aid computer literacy; particularly important for those without the luxury of a computer at home.

I really feel we have a moral duty to keep our libraries open. Literacy is an incredibly important factor in our education and the importance of libraries to aid us in that should not be underestimated.

I fear that once lost, these libraries will never be reinstated. n

CAROLINE JONES
Peppard Road

Parish council is no place for party politics

My letter headed, 'Playing a part in local democracy', published in your December/January edition, was accompanied by a colourful illustration indicating voting on party lines.

I take the very strong view that party politics should have no place in parish council elections nor in council decision-making.

In May, good candidates are needed totally irrespective of any party political allegiance. Councillors should be elected on the basis of their active commitment to their local area and their support for transparent, accountable, well-run local government. n

DOUGLAS KEDGE (Parish councillor)
Lea Road

Question: *When is a university not a university?*

The answer: When it is the University of the Third Age.

The University of the Third Age, or U3A, as it is known, is a self-help, self-managed, lifelong learning co-operative for older people.

It is aimed at retired individuals and provides them with opportunities to share in a wide range of groups and to pursue learning, not for qualifications but for fun.

The emphasis is very much on social interaction and the enjoyment of life. The groups are run by volunteers, with an elected committee, and the activities are provided in response to the needs and interests of members.

The Reading U3A is a large and active branch, running over 50 different groups and activities.

The groups meet in members' houses. They discuss books and plays and writing for pleasure.

There are several music groups, including music appreciation, a big band and jazz music group along with enjoying opera sessions.

Those who enjoy foreign languages are well catered for, with conversation groups (at various levels) in Spanish, French, German and Italian. Many pastimes such as Scrabble, Travel Talk and Chess are available.

Open meetings are held in the Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading (behind the Reading Public Library). These include the monthly members' meetings, the Christmas party, and the welcome meeting for new members.

The U3A provides the opportunity for learning in a pressure-free environment but above all for friendship and fun.

For further information contact: Membership secretary Dyson England on 0118 941 3668 or dysonquality@msn.com.

Give it a try; you won't regret it. 

Tom Fort FORGETTING

The other day my mobile rang as I was on the bus going through Emmer Green. As I rarely have the thing with me, and very rarely indeed have it on (the source of occasional tension between me and my dear wife), this was enough to make me jump considerably.

It was the dentist's receptionist. "Mr Fort?" I admitted it. "We were expecting you at 3.45." It was just after 4pm. "I am most terribly sorry," I grovelled. What I really wanted to do was weep

at this latest illustration – if any were needed – of failing mental powers.

I used to get irritated with elderly people who paralysed the forward movement of the check-in queue at Waitrose by forgetting their pin numbers. Now I am in weekly terror of becoming one of them. For ages I kept my original pin number in my head without difficulty. After a couple of embarrassing blank moments I took advice and changed it to something more memorable. At present I still know when my

birthday is. But for how long?

The only consolation in all this is that my life is so uneventful that there is only a limited number of appointments that I have to abase myself for missing. If I were busier, half my time would be taken up saying sorry for not turning up.

The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould was the famously absent-minded author of Onward Christian Soldiers and an incredible number of novels and other books, as well as being the father of fifteen children.

*Note from the editor:
Tom had to be reminded
to send in this column ...*



At a party in his rectory, Baring-Gould spotted a pretty young girl and attempted to engage her in conversation. "What's your name, my dear?" he asked genially. "Alice, father," she replied. "I'm your daughter". Then she burst into tears.

At least I haven't sunk that far. Not yet. 

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Sue Ryder

ANNUAL VILLAGE QUIZ

Will be held on Friday 18 March 2011
At
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(By kind permission of the Head Teacher)

START 7.30pm (please)

Teams of up to SIX PLAYERS (limited to 22 teams)

Entry Fee £10 per team

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Just before Christmas, we learned that congratulations were
due to Father Graham, our Rector, on his appointment as an
Honorary Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Also deserving of our congratulations was the 1st Sonning
Common Cubs' pack, who battled through the December
snow to attend our monthly family service at St John's.

Easter is late this year (24 April) and so, correspondingly, is
Lent. Although fasting is not observed so strictly as it once
was, the festivities of Shrove Tuesday, the day immediately
preceding Lent, are still enjoyed by many - even if it is only a
case of pancakes for tea!

A service will be held on:

Ash Wednesday (9 March), 8pm, All Saints' Church, Peppard

On Wednesday 16 March, and the subsequent four
Wednesdays, we will be holding our Lent Course, at Christ the
King Church, in Sedgewell Road, at 7.30pm and at 2pm.

This year's course is Rich Inheritance - Jesus' legacy of love.
It includes an audio tape on which Canon Simon Stanley
puts questions to a team of panellists:

Archbishop Vincent Nichols - Roman Catholic Archbishop of
Westminster

Paula Gooder - writer and lecturer in biblical studies

Jim Wallis - author and public theologian

Inderjit Bhopal - theologian and Methodist minister

The Women's World Day of Prayer is on Friday, 4 March.
Look out for details of a local service.

Mothering Sunday is on 3 April. n

NEIL SCOTT

[on behalf of Parochial Church Council]

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The Origins OF SONNING COMMON

The parish of Sonning Common as we know it today did not exist until 1952. The modern parish was formed by merging pieces of the old parishes of Sonning and Shiplake with some parts of Kidmore End.

There had always been an area called Sonning Common which was the highest point of the parish of Sonning; poor and infertile land traditionally left as scrub and woodland, consequently inhabited by a few poor agricultural workers and woodsmen.

Sonning Common was that part of the land bounded by Wood lane, Reades Lane, and Gallowstree Road, which extended down to Shiplake Bottom. From there up to Blounts Court Road was the parish of Shiplake (see map).

At the beginning of the 19th century there were hardly any houses in Sonning Common. Bishopswood Farm existed as did Blackmore Farm and Reddish Manor. Most of the land was held by the owners of Crowsley Park or Blounts Court.

There was a handful of cottagers' dwellings, some of which still exist – Orchard Farm, off Woodlands Road, a cottage (Kimmeridge)

in Woodlands Road, and the group of cottages in and near Wychwood Close.

If there was a centre to the village it was along Wood Lane and Hog Lane (Woodlands Road, to you or I).

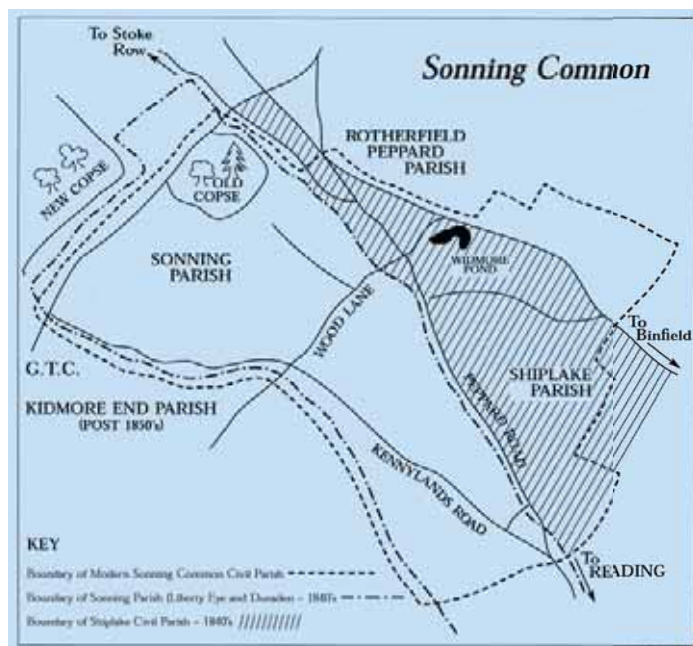
There were cottages along Kennylands Road (called Kennellands on one old map) and one along Shiplake Bottom as well as the Old Bakery on Blounts Court Road (which dates from the late 16th century).

Nearly all of these dwellings backed on to the open common land and depended on it to eke out a living.

The common land disappeared with the local enclosures of 1816. The industrial revolution and a huge rise in population meant there were more mouths to feed which made it worthwhile to cultivate poor land.

By 1801 there were so many applications to enclose the commons that a General Enclosure Act was passed which made it easier for landowners to take the commons. In 1836 enclosure by consent was ratified.

This was fine for the landowners but not for the poor people who depended on the common land for various rights such as wood gathering and grazing, but who had no voice.



Large landowners got together to purchase, divide and fence in the common land. Locally that meant that James Atkyns Wright of Crowsley park, Sir Charles Price of Blounts Court and Samuel Palmer of Sonning got the lion's share. They set about putting fences around the commons.

Parliament decreed that there should be recompense for the poor who had lost their rights to the common land. So, a piece of land was put aside to be rented out and the rents were used to give an 'allotment' of fuel and money.

In Sonning Common this field was situated along the south side

of Gallowstree Road and part of it forms the modern allotments. To this day the income from the land is managed by The Poor's Land Charity which allocates funds, at its discretion, to those parishioners who ask for help.

So, by the 1840s the commons no longer existed but the village began to expand during the rest of the century. It remained still a remote area whose residents were overwhelmingly dependent on farm work but gradually that began to change. n

To be continued ...

JILL KENDAL

Jill, from Gallowstree Common, is an amateur local historian and the author of a booklet about Sonning Common in the 19th century entitled, 'A little world apart'. She taught at Sonning Common Primary School until 1994 and is involved with many local organisations.

Students dazzle in Grease

Chiltern Edge students, from years 8 to 11, put their hearts and souls into staging a dazzling performance of rock musical Grease recently.

The first whole school musical production in three years was well worth the wait.

Sizeable crowds were entertained by a fantastically lively and brilliantly choreographed performance, which began with a rendition of the Bee Gees theme tune, 'Grease is the word', to the classic seventies film starring John Travolta and Olivia Newton John.

The original stage musical followed, containing all the well-known tunes like, 'Greased Light'n'g' and 'We go together'. Both real crowd pleasers, these tunes were given first-class treatment by the energetic, 50-strong cast during the three-night performances.

'Alone at the drive-in movie', was sung by a melancholy Danny Zuko, played by a convincing Branagh Crealock, while Susie Longshaw played the female lead, good-girl

Sandy, who later stunned the audience with her rock chick side.

The main cast members were all very strong and there were notable performances in cameo roles of members of the Pink Ladies and T-birds too.

However, special mention must be made of PE teacher Mr Joyce, who gave a suitably mature (!) and amusing rendition of DJ Vince Fontaine!

Many congratulations and thanks for a great show must go to all the cast and those involved behind the scenes, particularly teachers Maz Baxter, Head of Drama, who directed and choreographed the production and Barbara Crawshaw, who oversaw musical direction. The show was also a fitting end to Barbara's long career as a languages teacher at the school. n

JO QUINTON

RIGHT: FROM TOP-BOTTOM

n Branagh Crealock, who played sensitive hard boy Danny Zuko in Grease.

n Branagh Crealock and Susie Longshaw in the lead roles of Danny and Sandy.

n The Grease cast.



Pictures: **SAM HANCOCK**

It was a busy year for local gardeners



The village's friendly gardening club, Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society, had another fruitful year in 2010.

It held two successful shows, organised three coach trips to homes and gardens, six winter talks and a garden reception topped off by the AGM in December.

Mark Richards was re-elected as chairman while Dave Brewer was re-elected as treasurer. A fresh look was taken at the constitution and a few changes were promoted and accepted.

Copies of the revised constitution can be obtained from Bob Newnham.

The Society holds regular talks on plants and gardening issues. Forthcoming

speakers include David Taylor on pelargoniums, on 9 February, while on 9 March Tim Butler will speak about lavender.

Everybody is very welcome to attend these presentations which start at 7.30pm at Chiltern Edge School, in Reades Lane. Members are free and non-members pay £2.

The Society's spring show is due to take place on 2 April at Chiltern Edge School.

Further information on the above and future events can be obtained from Bob Newnham (bob.newnham@btopenworld.com) and the website:

www.chilternedgehorticulturalsociety.btck.co.uk n

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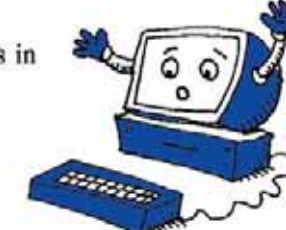
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THURSDAY 17 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 17 Sonning Common Women's Institute - Sugarcraft demonstration by Daphne Cook Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 18 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am	FRIDAY 18 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm
MONDAY 21 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm	FRIDAY 4 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am	FRIDAY 4 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm	MONDAY 7 FISH - Garden centre visit 1.30pm
WEDNESDAY 9 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - The Lavender Story by Tim Butler Chiltern Edge School theatre 7.30pm	THURSDAY 17 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 17 Sonning Common Women's Institute - AGM plus quiz Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 18 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am
FRIDAY 18 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm	FRIDAY 18 Annual village quiz Sonning Common Primary School 7.30pm	MONDAY 21 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm	FRIDAY 25 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm

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